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Recreation Area Management Plan  
for the  
DENALI BLOCK  
Alaska

Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

Recommended by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Lead Planner, Anchorage Area Office, October 1987

Recommended by: \_\_\_\_\_  
District Manager, Glennallen District, Oct. 1987

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_  
State Director, Alaska, October 1987

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## CHAPTER ONE-INTRODUCTION

### A. LOCATION AND SETTING

The Denali Block is situated between the Richardson Highway and the Parks Highway in Southcentral Alaska. The Block lies 210 miles north of Anchorage via the George Parks Highway, and south of Fairbanks 179 miles via the Richardson Highway, and 148 miles via the George Parks Highway. The Denali Highway is a 132 mile dirt road which bisects the Denali Block from east to west, and provides important access for the recreating public. This management unit consists of approximately 3,726,000 acres, however, the state selections have reduced the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) managed lands to \_\_\_\_\_ acres. It is likely that a great portion of the Block will be retained by the BLM in the future during continued land exchanges. Therefore, this planning document will treat the Denali Block as potential BLM lands and will make recommendations for management accordingly. (See Map \_\_\_, page \_\_\_, for the location and landownership patterns.)(\*\*\*\*INSERT BASE MAP GRAPHICS\*\*\*\*)

### B BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The national role of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is to provide for the multiple use of Public Lands. This includes providing for resource based recreational opportunities. The federal government provides for the management of recreational areas of national and international significance.

A recreational area management plan (RAMP) is an internal management document which identifies the management actions necessary to achieve recreation related decisions. The planning document provides a regional overview of the recreational opportunities within the Denali Block and develops the goals and objectives for providing recreational opportunities to the public. Then, the plan lays out the proposed direction, identifies specific actions and the sequence for implementation of the actions. The plan will set, maintain and prioritize district actions necessary for directing recreational management responsibilities. A RAMP reflects the best professional judgement of the planner and manager, is tempered by the public, and is based on projected future recreational needs.(\*\*\*\*INSERT PLANNING PROCESS GRAPHICS\*\*\*\*)

The RAMP will serve as a flexible tool for attaining a full and balanced district wide recreational program for the period of 1987-2000. By the year 2000 the BLM should be able to reassess the recreational needs and preferences of the public, know the final outcome of state selections and be able to update its planning and management efforts.

During the development of this plan, the BLM has performed a literature review of state planning documents which effect the Block. The BLM entered into a Cooperative Agreement with the State Department of Natural Resources to allow the state to provide the BLM with assistance in developing the document. It is believed that a cooperative planning effort for lands, which are shared jointly by more than one agency, will be more effective.

The plan is arranged into chapters in order to provide a brief resource overview of the Denali Block, to describe the recreational goals which drive management responsibilities, to list the objectives necessary for meeting the goals and to discuss the issues which need to be resolved in order to provide for outdoor recreational experiences. The plan will include a list of actions which need to be taken to meet the overall goals and resolve the major issues. The final section of the plan will be written to provide the BLM with a list of implementation actions and cost estimates required for effective recreational management.(\*\*\*INERT CHAPTER GRAPHICS???\*\*\*)

#### C. MANAGEMENT AREA RESOURCE DESCRIPTION

##### 1. Recreation:

The public lands and waters within the Denali Block are actively used by the public for a variety of recreational activities. The Block is BLM's most intensively used land area, receiving one quarter of a million visitor days per year in 1984.\* Fishing is one of the most popular activities. The larger lakes and extensive river systems provide the public with opportunities to catch lake trout, salmon, grayling, Dolley Varden, rainbow, round whitefish, longnose suckers and burbot.

The traveling public will often drive through the Denali Block along the Denali or Richardson Highways. The public comes to this area to observe the spectacular wild scenery, wildlife and undisturbed open space. Driving for pleasure, wildlife viewing, and photography are popular activities occurring throughout the accessible areas of the block. In March of 1987, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service found 109.7 million or half of all adults participated in non-consumptive wildlife related activities such as feeding, observing, and photographing wildlife.\*

Associated with road travel, are the activities of camping and use of outdoor recreational vehicles (ORV). The BLM has several primitive campgrounds along the road system in the Block which are receiving continuous summer use. There are numerous undeveloped sites which also receive use by people desiring more private camping opportunities, or camping in areas where public facilities do not exist. For the people who know the area, or who are specifically

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\*

looking for additional opportunities, there is a network of undeveloped ORV trails throughout the Block. The trails are used by weekend ORV pleasure riders, and heavily used during hunting season for access to prime hunting areas.

The Block receives its heaviest use during big game hunting season, held during the end of August into mid September. All of the BLM campgrounds are full beyond capacity during the last weeks of August and early September. Undeveloped gravel pits and highway turnouts are also crowded with hunters. People come from all over the state, the lower forty-eight and overseas to partake in the exceptional hunting opportunities. Caribou, bears, moose, and waterfowl and game birds are hunted on a regular basis during open seasons.

There are two federally designated National River Systems within the Block. The public travels from all corners of the globe to float these magnificent waterways. The public also uses many of the other lakes and streams in the Block for water oriented recreation purposes. Both motorized and non-motorized boaters (rafters, canoers, kayakers, jet, air and motorboaters) can be found on the large network of waters in the Block throughout the summer season.

Gathering edible plants is a popular recreational activity in the Block. In the spring, the public gathers fiddle heads from ferns and edible mushrooms. Berry picking occurs throughout the Block during the fall season. The public will be found along the road system and water accessible areas picking blueberries, salmonberries, nagoonberries, cloudberries and other types of edible plants. The activity may be associated with subsistence lifestyles, but also by people who find pleasure in the activity itself.

There is some horseback riding occurring within the Block, but the activity is generally associated with hunting. Since the Block is located a long distance from any of the major cities in the state, transporting horses for purley recreational purposes adds to the expense of the activity. Horseback riders will travel to the block for extended trips on occasion.

With the advent of mountain bicycles, the Denali Highway is beginning to see mountain bike riders along the road any time during the snow-free season. The use is very light at this time, but is expected to increase as the road becomes better known as an excellent place to ride.

Winter recreational activities vary depending upon the winter conditions. The extremely low temperatures (-60 degrees F) and strong winds make the Block<sup>WY</sup> inhabitable during the darkest winter months. However, during certain portions of the winter, when the conditions are not at the extreme range, the public is using the area for ice fishing, snowmachining, snowshoeing, sledging, dogmushing, pulka and ski-jouring, and cross country skiing.

2. Heritage:

The Denali Block is rich in cultural heritage values. The Tangle Lakes Archeological District (TLAD) lies within the heart of the Block and contains 466,000 acres. The TLAD has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1971.

The district contains hundreds of archeological sites in an outstanding setting of glacial landforms. More than 220 sites have been recorded, making this one of the densest occurrences of prehistoric sites in the North American subarctic. Some sites have been estimated to be 10,000 years old. The area also contains geological formations with the potential to contain sites not yet identified.

To date, very little has been documented of historic Native use of the area. Ahtna informants and accounts of early explorers indicate that the area was used seasonally for hunting and fishing, and that the area contains Indian trails.

Little remains in the Block from activities occurring during the American period, starting from about 1898. Military and civilian exploration parties crossed the area in search of gold. The management unit contains historical as well as ongoing mining activity. The largest open pit gold placer operation in the state is within this block of land. In the southern part of the Block an oil and gas basin occupies an ancient lake bed. It is likely that the mineral resources will play an important role in the future history of the Block.

3. Viewshed:

The scenic views within in the block are some of the most outstanding in the state. From the eastern side of the Block there are magnificent views of the Wrangle mountains, which lie to the south. From the western side of the Block, there are views of Mt. McKinley, the most popular natural feature in the state. From prominent ridges along the Richardson Highway there are expansive views of the Copper Basin which clearly depict the vastness of the states natural resources. While travelling along the Denali Highway there are expansive views of watershed drainages, the MacClaren and the Susitna Rivers, as well as close-up views of the heart of the Alaska Range. Both the state and federal government have numerous studies of the significant scenic features along the road system.

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4. Fish and Wildlife:

Approximately 35 species of mammals and 110 species of birds can be found in the Block. Wildlife species such as grizzly and black bear, moose, wolf, caribou, fox, beaver, marten, and mink are common enough to be regularly sighted from the Denali Highway. Nearly all the mammal species occur as permanent residents, although certain species hibernate during winter. Swans, ptarmigan, migratory waterfowl, songbirds, hawk and great horned owls, common loon and raptors-bald eagles, osprey, gyrfalcon, and peregrine falcons are commonly sighted. The vast majority of birds use the area only to nest and rear young. Most nesting birds arrive in May and leave by mid September.

The pristine lakes and streams in the Block support an abundant amount of fish. Arctic grayling are found in most of the streams and larger lakes. Lake trout, burbot, round whitefish, and longnose suckers are usually found in the larger lakes. Rainbow trout are found in the larger clear water streams. Surprisingly, except in the Gulkana drainage, almost no salmon are found.

5. Subsistence: (Bob King)

6. Climate:

The climate is continental. Relatively hot summers in the range of 66 degrees to 70 degrees F are followed by very cold winters ranging from 10 degrees to -60 degrees F. Winds and precipitation are light, although locally high winds are generated by downslope movement of dense, cold air along the footslopes of the Alaska Range in the northern part of the Block. However, the winds are often very strong during the winter, and cause great temperature drops due to the wind chill factor.

7. Vegetation and Terrain:

The terrain in the Block ascends northward from open wetlands to forested, rolling country into treeless alpine meadows. The flat lowlands are silty and clay like, while the low rolling glacial moraines, are gravelly and may contain loamy soil types. The topography along the middle of the Block consists of rounded ridges of 3,500 to 5,000 feet separated by wide lowlands formed of glacial deposits. The glacier-covered peaks of the Alaska Range, which generally extend from 6,000 to 18,000 feet in elevation, form the northern boundary. The mountain slopes above treeline are generally well drained, with shallow, stony to gravelly to loamy soils.



There are nine ecosystems within the Denali Block. The alpine and barren, moist tundra, upland spruce (hardwood forest), lowland spruce (hardwood forest, low brush), muskeg bog, high brush, bottomland spruce, poplar forest and wet tundra. The diversity in flora supports the abundant wildlife populations.

Overall the terrain below treeline is very wet and rugged, and difficult to travel upon overland. However, the terrain above treeline is very fragile. Above treeline human movement is easier and the ORV is capable of covering great distances in relatively short periods of time. With the near arctic environment, short growing season and harsh winters, these sites are difficult to regenerate if resource damage occur.

8. Grazing:

The Denali Block does not contain any large acreages of quality grazing lands for domestic livestock and does not currently support any grazing activities. It is unlikely that grazing will become a prominent land use within the Block. It is possible, that domestic reindeer grazing could occur, however, the Block is located away from the population centers and slaughtering facilities in the state.

9. Materials:

The top soil layers are minimal in many areas of the block, with loose gravelly material lying underneath the soil in abundance. However, there is very little construction grade quality material readily available for construction. There is a need for large quantities of high quality material for future road and campground facility developments.

10. Subsurface:

The Denali Block contains locatable minerals dispersed throughout the area. There are known sites of gold, silver, copper, nickel, lead, iron, manganese, tin and zinc in the Amphitheater and Clearwater Mountains, as well as in the Alaska Range and Alphabet Hills.

There is ongoing exploration of leasable mineral in the Alphabet Hills. To date there are two plugged oil and gas wells in the area. There are also known coal basins in the Alphabet Hills and Clearwater Mountains.

No new mineral locations may occur in the Delta or Gulkana Wild and Scenic River Corridors, nor in the Denali Scenic Highway Study Corridor. The inner trans Alaska Pipeline Corridor is closed to mineral location and entry, while in the outer corridor mineral leasing may occur.

There are currently \_\_\_\_\_ number of active Federal mining claims in the Block. Since state selection, \_\_\_\_\_ mineral claims and \_\_\_\_\_ leasehold location orders have been submitted to the state. The current level of interest in the Block for mining indicates that the mineral activity will continue to grow as economic conditions warrant.

11. Water:

Water is a critical element of the Denali Block. The Block contains two federally designated river systems--the Delta River and the Gulkana River. The MacClaren, Susitna and Nenana Rivers are major drainages that flow from glacial headwater, through the management unit. There are also numerous water bodies, including one of the largest lakes in the Copper Basin area, Paxson Lake. Many of the lakes and streams are in pristine condition. Many of the smaller lakes and ponds throughout the block support nesting sites for waterfowl and particularly swan habitat.

12. Geology:

The Denali Block is crossed by a system of active faults with high earthquake potential. This system, called the Denali Fault System, extends along the Alaska Range southwest through the Clearwater Mountains and across the Susitna River near Watana Creek. In the northern part of the Block, the Alaska Range has extreme slopes with a high erosion rate and landslide potential.

The diversity of geologic features visible from the Denali Highway provides the traveling public with an opportunity to learn about the natural land forms and features. There are numerous features readily visible from the road systems.

D. RECREATION USE ANALYSIS

1. Statewide User Profile:

The State of Alaska, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation has recently completed the "Outdoor Recreation: Alaska" report. This document represents the statewide analysis for recreational opportunities, preferences and needs. The plan also includes the recent recreational use statistics gathered by the Division of Tourism.

The following points were highlighted in the documents:

a. Participation Rates

Southcentral Alaska accommodates 94,520 people recreating at one time. (\*\*\*\*INSERT GRAPHICS SC W/ DENALI BLOCK\*\*\*\*)

The number of out-of-state visitors has grown 5-10 per cent per year, increasing from 86,700 in 1967 to 774,980 in 1985.

The visitation to national parks in Alaska is increasing at several times the average rate of increase nationwide.

b. Existing Facilities

Southcentral Alaska offers 70% of the designated camping sites and 74% of the developed trails statewide.

In Southcentral Alaska many of the developed sites are already overcrowded and suffer from overuse. The state park system is looking to include an additional 23 units and to add 16 existing areas that will be managed by someone else.

The state Department of Natural Resources has classified over 19 million acres of state land as public recreation lands, with 790,207 acres have been recommended for inclusion in the State Park System.

c. Areas Supporting Activities

The Chugach, Kenai, Talkeetna, and Wrangell mountains provide the backbone for recreation areas in the region.

d. Reasons for Recreating in Alaska

Outdoor recreation and a wilderness environment are important reasons for the most of Alaska's half million residents and three quarters of a million visitors being here.

A majority of the out-of-state visitors come to Alaska for vacation or pleasure.

e. Alaska Participation

Fishing, tent camping, and hunting top the list of favorite recreation activities of residents in Alaska.

One third of Alaska residents have sport fishing licenses. The sale of hunting licenses has increased four fold per year since statehood, while fishing licenses have increased six fold.

Camping has a 45% participation rate, 21% higher than the rest of the nation.

Hiking and walking, running for pleasure, bicycling, and beachcombing are other favorite resident activities.

Alaskans find that getting away from the usual demands of life and being close to nature are the most important reasons for engaging in their favorite recreation activities.

Alaskans participate in walking/running for pleasure and driving for pleasure the most often.

Alaska shows much higher levels of participation than the nation as a whole in resource based activities.

High participation rates are found in hunting, winter off-road vehicle use, cross-country skiing, motorboating, and canoeing/kayaking.

Based on a 1979 survey, trail related activities combined had a greater number of participants than any other activity. Eighty one percent of respondents to the survey participated in one or more trail-related activities during the year. 28% participated in motorized activities. 75% participated in non-motorized trail related activities.

f. Visitor Participation

Two thirds of the visitors to the state intend to return.

Southcentral region was the most frequently visited. Two thirds of the visitors arrived by air, with state ferries and private watercraft travel being used as the second most popular mode of transportation. Only 10% of the visitors traveled by overland vehicle.

Visitors indicated that the pristine beauty of the state as the major attraction for coming to Alaska.

The most enjoyable activities and attraction to visitors included sightseeing, visiting friends, seeing Mt. McKinley and sport fishing.

The most popular activity of visitors to the state are sightseeing and visiting parks.

g. Reasons for Not Participating

The Alaskans stated that the reasons for not participating more often in recreation activities included lack of free time, the weather, high transportation costs, and inaccessibility by vehicle.

Alaskans stated that recreation area are too crowded in Southcentral for fishing, hunting, tent camping and alpine skiing. In the Interior region, high costs, inaccessibility and lack of places was often mentioned as reasons for not participating in recreational activities.

h. Recreation Desires

Activities Southcentral Alaskans state they would like to do further than one hour from their residents include camping, motorboating, and off-road vehicle use.

Activities Southcentral adult residents stated they would like to do more often are fishing, walking, running, hiking and camping.

Activities Interior adult residents stated they would like to do more often are tent and RV camping, driving for pleasure, walking, running, and hiking.

Activities Interior Alaskans state they would like to do further than one hour from their residents include camping, motorboating, fishing, walking, running, hiking and off-road vehicle use.

i. Activity Preferences

Sightseeing and visiting parks are the first and third most frequently engaged in activities. Sport fishing, camping/hiking and pleasure boating were in the top ten activities listed.

Seven and a half percent of the total visitors spent nights in park and wilderness areas.

j. Tourism Economy

The number of out-of-state visitors and their contribution to the Alaska economy has increased 5% per year and 12.3% from 1984 to 1985.

The average expenditure per visitor in 1983 was \$1,506.00. Tourists brought over \$1.16 billion dollars to the state in 1985. It is estimated that one out of every 10 jobs in Alaska is directly or indirectly related to the visitor industry.

The state tourism industry will continue to increase significantly with the continued construction of infrastructure accommodations for out-of-state visitors.

Major facilities which provide the greatest potential for a return on investment would be privately owned and operated.

2. Recreation Needs and Demands

a. Statewide Recreation Needs

- 1.) Improve recreation facilities
- 2.) Improve winter recreation opportunities
- 3.) Accommodate out-of-state visitor, for periods longer than 24 hours
- 4.) Support tourism
- 5.) Support industry and economic base
- 6.) Encourage private recreational developments
- 7.) Provide interpretive information on natural history, recreational opportunities, signs and brochures

b. Southcentral Alaska Recreation Needs

- 1.) Summer hiking trails
- 2.) ORV trails within one hour of communities
- 3.) Boat launches, with adequate parking
- 4.) Target ranges

c. Interior Alaska Recreation Needs

- 1.) Foot trails
- 2.) Summer/winter ORV trails
- 3.) Bicycle trails
- 4.) Target ranges

d. Southcentral Alaska Recreation Demands

Walking and running trails are in the greatest demand in Southcentral Alaska. Driving for pleasure is the second most highly demanded activity in the region while camping is the third. Bicycling and fishing are in the top five places of the most demanded activities.

e. Interior Alaska Demand

In the Interior region, further than one hour from Fairbanks, the demand for more freshwater boating and trail recreation is needed.

f. Rural Alaskan Priorities

There is a high priority of needs for rural Alaskans to have existing trail systems protected for dog mushing and other winter activities and to have picnic facilities at scenic locations. Facilities are needed close to villages. Village recreational opportunities should be based on taking advantage of Alaska's environmental conditions, e.g., snow.

g. Facility Needs

Further development of facilities and services is needed to help visitors actively enjoy Alaska's wild pristine beauty.

h. Extend Season of Use

There is also a need to develop visitor attractions which extend the summer season.

i. Diversity Needs

The full spectrum of recreational opportunities, from primitive and remote to highly developed and accessible, is needed to meet the varied preferences.

j. Wilderness Needs

The state also finds that selected portions of some parks should be managed on a wilderness basis so that visitors have to work to get to them on foot rather than by airplane, vehicle or boat. Construction of trailhead facilities along nearby roads, trails, and cabin systems are needed to realize the potential for foot access into these parks.

k. Unsatisfied Demand

The main unsatisfied recreation demand in the Copper Basin area is for road accessible, land based year-round opportunities and facilities, particularly campsites and trails.

l. Population Center Needs

There is a shortage of public recreation lands near the population centers. The strategic access location are often in private ownership.

m. Winter Recreation Needs

The state has determined that improved access to parks and recreation facilities and an increased international awareness of Alaska's winter recreation potential will result in an increase in out-of-state visitor use of the recreational resources.

The outdoor recreation industry should mount a concerted effort to establish winter outdoor recreation opportunities.

n. Management Recommendations:

The state finds that cooperative agency management agreements should be developed to allow for the management of administrative or legislative designated submerged lands.

From the state's viewpoint, the national parks in Alaska should provide facilities which retain visitors longer than the typical 24 hour hotel visit by broadening the capital improvement focus from hotels to facilitating outdoor experiences of longer duration in a natural environment through establishment of hut and trail systems in small portions of parks where there would be minimum conflict with wildlife and other park values.

o. States View of Federal Role

The state also finds that the BLM should increase the field capabilities and capital improvement budget to provide more recreation opportunities in the public domain.



The federal government should be responsible for meeting the level of needs for the public willing to travel more than one hour from communities. This includes resource based activities which utilize trail, water, and wilderness such as fishing, tent and recreation vehicle camping, motorboating, hiking, canoeing and kayaking. Alaskans participated in fishing, driving for pleasure, motorboating, tent camping, and hiking with a pack in areas further then one hour from home most often.

3. Summary of Statewide Resource Planning Documents:

The state Department of Natural Resources, Division of Land and Water Management has developed area wide plans for the Tanana Basin, the Susitna Basin and the Copper River area. All three planning areas overlap with portions of the Denali Block. The site specific recommendations which effect the Block in the plans are limited. However, there are numerous general recreation related recommendations which are listed below.

a. Tanana Basin Area Plan:

During the public planning process, the public attitude for use of state lands revealed that overall, fish and wildlife and recreation uses received the strongest support of any of the possible uses for state land. Basinwide, participants selected fish and wildlife/recreation 86% of the time as the preferred use.

Subregion 4-Parks Highway/West Alaska Range: Public access to trails, historic sites and waters received the most support. Preservation of recreational opportunities, such as water sports, viewing wild scenery, and providing access to remote lands was listed as important mangement responsibilities. Access sites along the Nenana River were identified. The Nenana River from the Denali Highway to the Rex Bridge is proposed for a State Recreation River. Public concern was noted regarding the rivers should not be overmanged by government.

Protection of the high recreation potential and management of the Mangement Unit B for recreational use was determined. Construction of public recreation cabins was recommeded along the Nenana River, west of the Denali Block.

Subregion 5, East Alaska Range: The entire subunit has value for recreation, due to the high elevation, panorama of alpine scenery, opportunities for activities on lakes, and summer and winter back-country exploration. The extremely scenic, accessible area is susceptible to degradation of wild and natural landscapes due to the lack of trees.



Fielding Lake and Summit Lake are recommended for legislative designation as State Recreation Areas. Public cabins were supported, to provide shelter for a greater number of recreation users. The unit will be managed to maintain its important recreation values.

The plan notes that providing outstanding views and physical access to high mountain recreation opportunities, e.g., glacier routes, is important to maintain. Continued public access to trails and opportunities to view and hunt wildlife should also be maintained.

b. Susitna Area Plan:

The recreation policies include:

- developing state park system facilities which will provide a wide range of year-round opportunities;
- providing recreation opportunities on land and water areas which serve multiple use purposes; and
- encouraging commercial development of recreational facilities and services.

Talkeetna Mountains Subregion: There are important public trail access routes along the Denali Highway which should be maintained in public ownership. Other means of important access include landing strips, fly-in lakes and boatable rivers. The area is one of the most heavily used big game hunting areas in the state, offering moose, Dall sheep, bear and caribou. The majority of the range of the 20,000 animals of the Melchiana caribou herd is located here. The area's many lakes and rivers offer excellent fishing for salmon, lake and rainbow trout, grayling and other species. The subregion offers millions of acres of alpine country for hiking, camping, skiing and climbing.

Protecting water quality, fish and wildlife habitat and public access along the Denali Highway is important. This subregion will be managed to protect its current status as one of the major game harvest areas in the state for moose, caribou and sheep. Streams will be managed to protect their recreation and commercial fishery values. The area also will be managed to maintain a full range of summer and winter recreation activities, including skiing, mountain climbing, hiking and snowmobiling. Adequate access for these recreation purposes should be maintained in public ownership. The area is particularly suited for cross country hiking, skiing and snowmobiling. The relatively gentle mountain range and open terrain and vegetation permit cross country travel without construction of improved trails in many areas. The state and borough should seek funding to build and operate public use cabins in select area.

The road/rail system that would provide access to a hydroelectric project on the Susitna lies along the Denali Highway. The Alaska Power Authority's proposed access route would provide access to the Watana Dam site via Deadman Creek. If the Susitna hydroelectric project is ever constructed, the project could provide many new outdoor recreational opportunities. New trail systems could be developed throughout the area.

The Denali Highway management unit should be managed to retain public lands in public ownership. The lands should be managed to continue to provide opportunities for a variety of public recreational activities, to protect fish and wildlife habitat and to allow mining.

Recreation activities include hunting, fishing, boating, wilderness hiking, berrypicking and driving for pleasure along the Denali Highway. Most of the activity is focused along the highway corridor, and to a lesser extent along the Sustina and Maclaren rivers. Protecting and improving public access from the Denali Highway into adjacent backcountry hunting areas and protection of scenic quality along the highway are two major objectives for the Denali Highway Management Unit.

The Clearwater River area should be used for hunting and other public uses, while making some lands available for leasing to private individuals for commercial recreation development.

Development of public use cabins, picnicing and parking areas, and campground are encouraged along the Denali Highway.

c. Copper River Basin Area Plan:

The recreation goals are:

to provide for recreation opportunities, to protect the recreation resource, to protect the cultural resource and to develop the international tourist attraction.

The area plan supports the development of a public use cabin system, encouraging private recreational facility development on public land, and maximizing views along highway systems to improve the scenic resource availability.

Dispersed recreation activity such as snowmachining, cross-country skiing, hiking, all-terrain vehicle use and canoeing occur throughout the basin. There are currently only small, developed recreation sites which the state manages.

Recreation related public comments received during the planning process:

- "Land should be set aside for public dumps."
- "Hunting is very accessible off the Denali Highway."
- "The campgrounds compete with the lodges."
- "We don't need more campgrounds."
- "The Paxson Lake boat launch is too crowded, one is needed in the BLM campground."
- "The state should take over the wayside at the north end of the lake."
- "The state should physically improve access to the Gulkana River at mile 137 and 143."
- "There shouldn't be any regulation on ORV's."
- "There shouldn't be any new trails and no improved access."
- "All people don't want more regulation."
- "Designated trails can concentrate use and cause more impacts."
- "Make sure state land sales do no mess up access to hunting, fishing, trapping and forestry."
- "Keep Paxson Lake as it is--the state should own it."
- "There is a need for recreation cabins for snowmachiners near Paxson."
- "There are enough cabins near Paxson already."
- "Ensure adequate public access to the Gulkana River."
- "Designate the Gulkana as a State Recreation River."
- "Close the Gulkana River to mineral entry."
- "Protect the sharp tailed grouse displaying areas along the highway from Gakona to Sourdough."

Gulkana River/Richardson Highway Management Unit: The state recommends the Gulkana River to be designated as a State Wild and Scenic River to complement the National Wild and Scenic River designation. Development of the USAF backscatter radar site should be developed to minimize impact of fisheries and recreation resources. Access roads will be designed to minimize impacts on habitats and enhance public use of state land. The Swede Lake Trail, from the Denali Highway, gives road access to high valued recreation resources. Currently under BLM management, the area is proposed for state selection. If the state receives title, DLWM should consider appropriate management guidelines to maintain the recreational, cultural, and scenic resources and fish and wildlife habitat values.

Summit Lake Mangement Unit: The unit will be mangemet for multiple use with emphasis on public recreation and protection of salmon habitat. Summit Lake will be mangaged as a recreation lake. The Gulkana River and Summit Lake will be closed to mineral entry. The state should select additional federal land along the Deanli Highway in T21S, R10E, T22; T22S, R10E and T22S, R11E, Fairbanks Meridian. These lands will be managed for multiple use with emphasis on wildlife habitat and recreation. The Summit Lake are has high recreation potential. Fishing, boating, snowmobiling, and hiking are popular activities.

Summit Lake is suitable for state recreation area designation, however it will not be recommended currently, as there are other areas of higher priority.

Any planning efforts lying along the Denali Highway should utilize the DNR document, Denali to Wrangell-St. Elias. If the USAF selects a site in this area for the proposed backscatter radar facility, it should be developed to minimize impacts on fisheries and recreation resources. Access roads will be designed to minimize impacts on habitats and enhance public use of state land.

The Swede Lake Trail gives road access to high value recreation resources. The area is proposed for state selection. If the state receives title, DLWM should consider appropriate management guidelines at that time to protect the fish and wildlife habitat and recreational, cultural and scenic resources.

d. Denali to Wrangell-St. Elias Plan:

The DNR plan specifically recommends recreational opportunity development along the entire Denali Highway, mile by mile. The plan locates potential scenic turnouts, interpretive displays, river and land trail access, sites for visitor services and centers, material sites and other related development potential. The DNR plan was developed in consultation with the BLM and other land managers.

4. Regional Facility Inventory and Visitor Use Estimates

a. Bureau of Land Management

Within the Denali Block, the BLM manages \_\_\_campgrounds, \_\_\_undeveloped campgrounds, \_\_\_miles of river trail, \_\_\_miles of land trails, \_\_\_day use areas and \_\_\_\_\_.

Overall, visitor use is estimated to be rising slightly, with river use increasing downstream of the Sourdough Creek Campground the greatest. While the state is in an economic recession, it is likely that the recreational use will remain constant with a moderate increase up to the year 2000. As the rivers in the Matanuska Susitna Borough become more crowded and impacted, this road accessible area will receive increased use. If the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities finished the highway from Glennallen to Delta Junction and upgrades the Denali Highway, the use of the Block will grow more rapidly. However, it is unlikely that this area will receive the extensive use that the Kenai Peninsula is receiving, as the Copper Basin is further from the population centers of the state.

The average number of persons per group has remained at nearly 4 people per group. The percentage of people visiting from Fairbanks has remained at nearly 34%, Anchorage at 315 and 11% other. The greatest use of rivers is by rafting, then canoeing, with kayaks in third place and rafts with motors and canoes with motors the least.

1. Facility: Gulkana River-181 miles

<u>Year</u>	<u># of visitors</u>	<u>visitor days</u>	<u>day use visit</u>	<u>overnight visit</u>	<u>downstream visits</u>	<u>upstream visits</u>
1963	59	530				
1972	365	3200				
1975	888	8000				
1976	800	7200				
1977	1500	13500				
1978	1550	13950				
1979	1455	17320			73206	
1980	2772					
1981	3614	(2364 floating, 1250 motorized)				
1983	3,600	13000				
1986						

2. Facility: Delta River-62 miles

<u>Year</u>	<u># of visitors</u>	<u>visitor days</u>	<u>day use visit</u>	<u>overnight visit</u>	<u>downstream visits</u>	<u>upstream visits</u>	530
1963							
1972							
1975							
1976							
1977							
1978							
1979							
1980							
1981							
1986		1,200	150	70			

3. Facility: Sourdough Campground

<u>Year</u>	<u># of visitors</u>	<u>visitor days</u>	<u>day use visit</u>	<u>overnight visit</u>	<u>downstream visits</u>	<u>upstream visits</u>	530
1963							
1972							
1975							
1976							
1977							
1978	16,887	49,986	2,000	19,600			
1979							
1980							
1981							
1986			2,000	19,600			

4. Facility: Paxson Lake Campground

<u>Year</u>	<u># of visitors</u>	<u>visitor days</u>	<u>day use visit</u>	<u>overnight visit</u>	<u>downstream visits</u>	<u>upstream visits</u>
1963						
1972						
1975						
1976						
1977						
1978						
1979						
1980						
1981						
1986			3,000	26,900		

5. Facility: Paxson Lake Wayside

<u>Year</u>	<u># of visitors</u>	<u>visitor days</u>	<u>day use visit</u>	<u>overnight visit</u>	<u>downstream visits</u>	<u>upstream visits</u>
1963						
1972						
1975						
1976						
1977	3,604	55,664				
1978	14,200	55,664				
1979						
1980						
1981						
1986			500	6,840		

6. Facility: Tangle Lakes Campground

<u>Year</u>	<u># of visitors</u>	<u>visitor days</u>	<u>day use visit</u>	<u>overnight visit</u>	<u>downstream visits</u>	<u>upstream visits</u>
1963						
1972						
1975						
1976						
1977	14,099	51,320				
1978						
1979						
1980						
1981						
1986			1,500	14,700		

7. Facility: Tangle River Campground

<u>Year</u>	<u># of visitors</u>	<u>visitor days</u>	<u>day use visit</u>	<u>overnight visit</u>	<u>downstream visits</u>	<u>upstream visits</u>
1963						
1972						
1975						
1976						
1977	457x4					
1978	1814	7619				
1979						
1980						
1981						
1986			1,400	12,400		

8. Facility: Denali Highway

Year	# of <u>visitors</u>	visitor <u>days</u>	day use <u>visit</u>	overnight <u>visit</u>	downstream <u>visits</u>	upstream <u>visits</u>
1963						
1972						
1975						
1976						
1977						
1978						
1979						
1980						
1981						
1986			300	150		

9. Facility: Brushkana Campground

Year	# of <u>visitors</u>	visitor <u>days</u>	day use <u>visit</u>	overnight <u>visit</u>	downstream <u>visits</u>	upstream <u>visits</u>
1963						
1972						
1975						
1976						
1977						
1978						
1979						
1980						
1981						
1986			1,000	8,900		

10. Facility: Denali Highway

11. Facility: Richardson Highway

12. Facility: Parks Highway

13. Facility: Canyon Rapids trail, 1mi.

14. Facility: Dickey Lake Portage, 1 mi.

15. Facility: Haggard Creek trail, 7 mi.

16. Facility: Swede Lake trail, 10 mi.

17. Facility: Meier Lake trail, 7 mi.

18. Facility: Middle Fork Trail, 17 mi.

19. Facility: Gulkana River Easements-

20. Facility: Pipeline Corridor trail access

b. State of Alaska

1. Denali State Park
2. Dry Creek Campground
3. Fielding Lake Campground
4. Summit Lake Campground

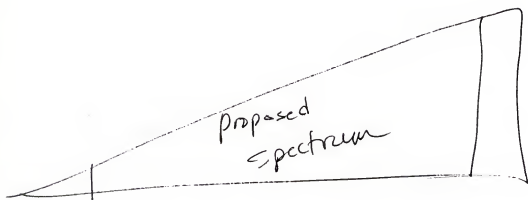
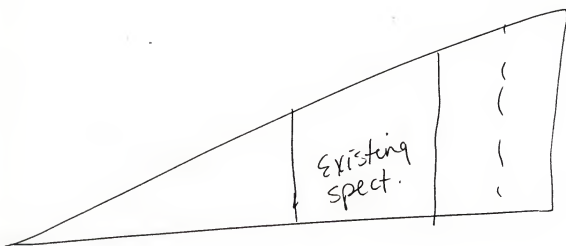
c. National Park Service

1. Denali National Park
2. Wrangel-St. Elias National Park

d. Private

1. Paxson Lake Lodge
2. Sourdough Roadhouse
3. Gracious House
4. MacClaren Lodge
5. Adventures Unlimited
6. Susitna Lodge
7. Jack River Inn
8. Flying Services
9. Lake Louise Lodge





5. Recreational Opportunity Spectrum for the Block  
(\*\*\*\*INSERT GRAPHICS, DRAWING + GRAPHS\*\*\*)

a. Introduction

The recreation opportunity spectrum is a framework for integrating recreation values into the land use planning process, project plans and management decisions. It is used as a tool for managers to analyze recreation opportunities through changes in management actions.

The recreation opportunity setting is a combination of physical, biological, social and managerial conditions that give value to a place. An opportunity includes qualities provided by nature (vegetation, landscape, topography, scenery), qualities associated with recreational use (levels and types of use), and conditions provided by management (developments, roads, regulations). By combining variations of these qualities and conditions, management can provide a variety of opportunities for recreationists.

The following text describes each class in the spectrum to help managers to develop more precise prescriptions for field operations. The lists are not all-inclusive, rather they provide the manager with a general characteristic overview for each class in the opportunity spectrum.

b. Description of the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Classes

1. PRIMITIVE (P)

Experience Opportunity: Opportunity for isolation from sights and sounds of man, to feel a part of the natural environment, to have a high degree of challenge and risk, and to use outdoor skills.

Setting Opportunity: Area is characterized by essentially unmodified natural environment of a fairly large size. Concentration of users is very low and evidence of other users is minimal. Area is managed to be essentially free from evidence of man-induced restrictions and controls. Only facilities essential for resource protection are used. No facilities for comfort or convenience of the user are provided. Spacing of groups is informal and dispersed to minimize contacts between user groups in the area. Motorized use within the area is not permitted.

Activity Opportunity: Camping, hiking, climbing, mountaineering, enjoying scenery or natural feature, nature study, photography, wildlife viewing, hunting (big game, small game, upland birds, waterfowl), trapping, fishing, non-motorized methods of river running, ski touring, snowshoeing and dogmushing.

2. TRADITIONAL (T)

Experience Opportunity: Opportunity for isolation from the sights and sounds of man is extremely likely. Motorized vehicles and equipment are permitted (including aircraft, ATV's and generators) for subsistence or traditional use related purposes. Opportunity to feel a part of the natural environment, to have a high degree of challenge and risk, and to use outdoor skills.

Setting Opportunity: Area is characterized by essentially unmodified natural environment of a fairly large size. Concentration of users is very low and evidence of other users is minimal. Area is managed to be essentially free from evidence of man-induced restrictions and controls. Only facilities essential for resource protection are used. No facilities for comfort or convenience of the user are provided. Spacing of groups is informal and dispersed to minimize contacts between user groups in the area. Motorized use within the area is permitted, but very rare. Motorized use is in conjunction with subsistence or traditional lifestyle related purposes.

Activity Opportunity: Camping, hiking, climbing, enjoying scenery or natural feature, nature study, photography, hunting (big game, small game, upland birds, waterfowl), fishing, gathering firewood, houselogs and berries, non-motorized methods of river running, ski touring, snowshoeing, dogmushing, snowmobiling, flightseeing, aircraft landings, incidental three-wheelers or ATV's.

3. SEMI-PRIMITIVE NONMOTORIZED (SPNM)

Experience Opportunity: Some opportunity for isolation from the sights and sounds of man, but not as important as for primitive opportunities. Opportunity to have high degree of interaction with the natural environment, to have moderate challenge and risk, and to use outdoor skills.

Setting Opportunity: Area is characterized by a predominately unmodified natural environment of moderate to large size. Concentration of users is low, but there is often evidence of other area users. On-site controls and restrictions may be present, but they are subtle. Facilities are provided for the protection of resource values and safety of users only. Spacing of groups may be formalized to disperse use and limit contacts between groups. Motorized use is not permitted.

Activity Opportunity: Camping, hiking, climbing, mountaineering, enjoying scenery or natural feature, nature study, photography, wildlife viewing, hunting (big game, small game, upland birds, waterfowl), fishing, non-motorized methods of river running, ski touring, snowshoeing, dogmushing.

4. SEMI-PRIMITIVE MOTORIZED (SPM)

Experience Opportunity: Some opportunity for isolation from the sights and sounds of man, but not as important as for primitive opportunities. Opportunity to have high degree of interaction with the natural environment, to have moderate challenge and risk, and to use outdoor skills. Explicit opportunity to use motorized equipment while in the area.

Setting Opportunity: Area is characterized by a predominately unmodified natural environment of moderate to large size. Concentration of users is low, but there is often evidence of other area users. On-site controls and restrictions may be present, but they are subtle. Facilities are provided for the protection of resource values and safety of users only. Spacing of groups may be formalized to disperse use and limit contacts between groups. Motorized use is permitted.

Activity Opportunity: Camping, hiking, climbing, mountaineering, enjoying scenery or natural feature, nature study, photography, wildlife viewing, hunting (big game, small game, upland birds, waterfowl), fishing, non-motorized methods of river running, ski touring, snowshoeing, dogmushing snowmobiling, flightseeing, aircraft landings, and ORV use (4WD, ATV).

5. ROADED NATURAL (RN)

Experience Opportunity: About equal opportunities for affiliation with other user groups and for isolation from sights and sounds of man. Opportunity to have a high degree of interaction with the natural environment. Challenge and risk opportunities are not very important except in specific challenging activities. Practice of outdoor skills may be important. Opportunities for both motorized and nonmotorized recreation are present.

Setting Opportunity: Area is characterized by a generally natural environment with moderate evidence of the sights and sounds of man. Resource modification and utilization practices are evident but harmonize with the natural environment. Concentration of users is low to moderate with facilities sometimes provided for group activities. On-site controls and restrictions offer a sense of security. Rustic facilities are provided for user convenience as well as for safety and resource protection.

Activity Opportunity: Picnicking, camping, hiking, climbing, enjoying scenery or natural feature, nature study, rock collecting, wood gathering, driving for pleasure, photography, wildlife viewing, hunting (big game, small game, upland birds, waterfowl), fishing, non-motorized methods of river running, snow play, ski touring, snowshoeing, dogmushing, snowmobiling, aircraft landings, and ORV use (4WD, ATV), interpretive use, rustic resorts and organized camps.

6. ROADED MODIFIED (RM)

Experience Opportunity: Little opportunity to be isolated from the sights and sound of man, due to the presence of a significant modification of the landscape through otherwise natural surroundings. However, though the opportunity for affiliation with other users exists, there is the opportunity to have a high degree of interaction with the natural environment. Challenge and risk opportunities are not very important except in specific challenging activities. Practice of outdoor skills may be important. Opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized recreation are present.

Setting Opportunity: Area is characterized by a generally natural environment with significant evidence of the sights and sounds of man. Resource modification and utilization practices are evident within expanse of the landscape. Concentration of users is low to moderate with facilities present, but facilities may or may not be available for visitor services. Restrictions may prevent visitors from having access to certain areas.

Activity Opportunity: picnicking, rock collecting, wood gathering, autor touring, sownhill skiing, snowplay, ice skating, water skiing and other water sports, hang gliding, interpretive use, rustic resorts and organized camps. The activities may have other modifications and use of the area may necessitate restriction of certain activities to prevent interruption of other management activities or to ensure visitor safety.

7. RURAL (R)

Experience Opportunity: Opportunities to experience affiliation with individuals and groups are prevalent as is the convenience of sites and opportunities. These factors are generally more important than the natural setting. Opportunities for wildland challenges, risk taking, and testing of outdoor skills are unimportant, except in those activities involving a challenge and risk.

Setting Opportunity: Area is characterized by substantially modified natural environment. Resource modification and utilization practices are obvious. Sights and sounds of man are readily evident, and the concentrations of users is often moderate to high. A considerable number of facilities are designed for use by a large number of people. Facilities are often provided for specific activities. Developed sites, roads and trails, are designed for moderate to high use. Moderate densities are provided far away from developed sites. Facilities for intensive motorized use are available.

Activity Opportunity: picnicking, rock collecting, wood gathering, autor touring, sownhill skiing, snowplay, ice skating, water skiing and other water sports, hang gliding, interpretive use, rustic resorts and organized camps, competitive games, spectator sports, bicycling, jogging, outdoor concerts and modern resorts.

6. Opportunities Needed within the Block

a. Diversifying Opportunity Classes

Evaluation of the existing recreation opportunities within the Denali Block indicates that currently the BLM is providing an over abundant amount of semi-primitive motorized related experiences. At the present, the Block is open to motorized vehicles, with limited restrictions. The restrictions are not well publicized or well known by the public and the signs which could inform the public are not maintained. There is no enforcement of the vehicle restrictions. Managerial presence is minimal on the trail systems. An increased management presence along the trail systems would help to educate and inform the public as to the locations and correct actions along the trails. Along the river systems, the wild sections of the rivers are managed the same as the recreational and scenic sections. Campground sites within the Block all provide the same opportunities, overnight camping, without destination oriented facilities.

To diversify the recreational opportunities, the BLM will need to concentrate its efforts on diversifying the types of opportunity classes which it will provide to the public. The Denali Block should contain adequate examples of the primitive, primitive traditional, semi-primitive non-motorized, roaded natural, roaded modified and rural opportunity classes. The variety of opportunity classes will then need to be managed appropriately for the class to enable the public to selectively choose between the types of opportunities desired.

b. Semi-primitive Non-motorized

There is a need for more specifically designated non-motorized areas, ranging from the semi-primitive and primitive ends of the opportunity spectrum. This includes management of the areas for non-motorized activities, and controls of motorized vehicles for subsistence or traditional use purposes only.

c. Semi-primitive Motorized

The BLM will need to re-establish its motorized vehicle uses and activities signing and management program more clearly, so that the public can differentiate between the semi-primitive motorized experiences and the roaded natural and roaded modified experiences.

d. Public Use Cabin System

The public has identified a need for public cabin systems, for both summer and winter use, and motorized and non-motorized uses. Utilizing the ROS, cabins can be located in the correct classification area, to provide for a diversity of opportunities.

e. Roaded Natural Areas

The roaded natural class areas will require additional expansion of opportunities. The Denali Highway road system interpretive plan should be implemented to provide for interpretation of the natural and cultural features within the Block, as well as clearly defining the ROS classification of areas to the public.

f. Changing Management Patterns

Once the public knows where it can go to perform a variety of activities, the easier the on-the-ground management will become. INITIALLY, CHANGING UNMANAGED USE PATTERNS INTO MANAGED USE PATTERNS WILL BE DIFFICULT. However, the manager must keep in mind that the overall purpose of the BLM recreation program is to provide for a diversity of opportunities, and not to merely manage for the on-going activities.

The roaded natural class can also expand the public's ability to recreate and to become educated about multiple use resource management through the development of a group camping facility. The overnight lodge type facility can provide space for outdoor education classes, Scout and church groups, and school groups to come to the public lands for educational purposes.



Opportunities to view wildlife can be expanded, by completeing a diversified class system which interprets the flora and fauna of the Block, and established non-motorized areas for wildlife viewing. Public use cabins and viewing blinds may be associated with this type of experience.

The BLM should be concentrating on ways to get the traveling public more involved with experiencing the lands it is traveling through. By providing short nature trails from rest stop or viewing areas, interpretive displays on the road system and in camping areas, and by providing facilities for people of all abilities. Developing some of the overnight campgrounds for destination use, rather than transient use will also help to diversify experiences.

Expanding the existing trail system to provide for short and long hiking experiences, motorized and non-motorized experiences and hikes for people of all abilities will aid in providing for diversity. Trails can be routed through a variety of habitat types, near cultural and geologic features, to provide for a diversity of interpretive learning experiences.

The BLM needs to provide for winter related recreational opportunities. Establishment of public use cabin systems along the motorized and non-motorized trail routes, development of warming shelters and providing for winter staging areas will help to diversify recreational opportunities.

Through the clarification of types of allowable uses on the rivers and lakes in the Block, the public can choose the type of experience it prefers. Currently, the public can not tell whether or not a body of water will be crowded, quiet, or the appropriate place to take its motorboat, or ski jet. The development of additional boat launching or river access sites will also help to diversify opportunities.

The BLM will need to work with the state of Alaska to either obtain the key recreational lands back into its management, or to work out cooperative management agreements with the state to share the management responsibilities. The public will clearly benefit by improved management of this quality recreation land base.



## CHAPTER II-RECREATIONAL MANAGEMENT INTENT STATEMENT

### A. GOALS OF THE MANAGEMENT BLOCK

The Denali Block outdoor recreation management program will be focused on six primary goals:

#### 1. Recreation Opportunity

To provide for a diversity of quality resource dependent outdoor recreational opportunities and experiences of national and international significance for the American People, while managing and fostering recreation in harmony with the principles of multiple use.

#### 2. Resource Protection

To manage and monitor the recreational opportunities in harmony with the principles of multiple use, while preserving and protecting the natural, cultural, and scenic resource values for the public's future enjoyment. Special emphasis will be given on the congressionally designated areas.

#### 3. Visitor Services

To provide for a quality recreation experience through visitor education, information and emergency services, emphasizing an on-the-ground presence.

#### 4. Partnerships

To coordinate recreational opportunity management with other public agencies and the private sector to enhance outdoor recreational experiences offered on and adjacent to the public lands.

#### 5. Economic Development

To foster the economic growth of the recreation industry and to assist in supporting the budgetary responsibilities of the federal government.

#### 6. Maintenance

To provide for quality maintenance of facilities to protect the BLM investment.

B. OBJECTIVES OF THE MANAGEMENT BLOCK

To meet the goals listed above, the District will strive to meet the following objectives by the year 2000:

1. Recreation Opportunity

- a. To provide for a continued broad spectrum of public outdoor recreation opportunities and experiences, which emphasize the existing natural values.
- b. To provide for a diversity of activities for all ages and abilities through facility design, expansion and development, and a provision of expanded opportunities.
- c. To provide for winter recreational opportunities and experiences, including trail systems, public use cabins and overnight parking facilities.
- d. To reassess the Special Recreation Management Area boundaries, objectives and proposed management actions to guarantee a wide variety of opportunities are provided to the public on public lands.
- e. To provide for land and water based trail related experiences of varying lengths, for both motorized and non-motorized trail users.
- f. To provide for the needs of the public seeking non-consumptive recreational experiences such as sightseeing, photography, wildlife observation and interpretation of the natural environment.
- g. To provide for roadside camping opportunities to meet current and future demands.
- h. To construct recreation facilities in the Block that are important to the enjoyment of the resources, including but not limited to recreation sites, trails, roads, visitor centers, and related improvements, as needed to meet regional recreation needs
- i. To protect traditional lifestyles.

2. Resource Protection

- a. To protect and maintain the natural values, wildlife, fisheries and water quality of the Gulkana and Delta National Wild and Scenic river systems.
- b. To reduce recreational user impacts on, and conflicts with the resource values of the Denali Block.
- c. To reduce recreational user conflicts, separate user groups, establish use limits and establish user allocations as necessary to protect the resources within the Block.

- d. To allocate recreational use as necessary to protect the natural resource values and recreational experiences.
- e. To prevent unwarranted resource damage throughout the Denali Block, while preserving the scenic quality, cultural, and natural resource values.
- f. To provide recreational facilities that protect the resource values within the Block.
- g. To use special recreation permits in order to maintain a balance between the use and protection of the basic natural, cultural and scenic resource values.
- h. To expand the acreage within the Gulkana Wild and Scenic River system as necessary to protect the wild character of the upper West Fork of the river.
- i. To protect the cultural resource values in the Block and allow only recreation uses which do not destroy those values.

3. Visitor Services

- a. To provide for a quality recreational experiences through expansion of field presence, visitor services, public education and information opportunities, and public health and safety services.
- b. To foster a public appreciation and understanding of the natural, cultural, and scenic resource values through interpretive methods.
- c. To develop an interpretive system to educate the public to wise multiple resource use, and to interpret the natural, flora and fauna, cultural/historic values, the geologic features, and the human evolutionary changes.
- d. To provide for necessary public assistance within the Block.
- e. To provide for basic information about the resources within the Block.
- f. To provide for visitor services when required to protect the resources and ensure its continued availability, protect and promote visitor safety, eliminate or reduce user and activity related conflicts, and encourage compliance with established use regulations.
- g. To provide law enforcement as necessary to provide for a quality visitor experience.
- h. To provide visitor information through the use of signing, maps, brochures, interpretation and visitor contact in the field.

4. Partnerships

- a. To manage facilities in in a consistent manner with other planning efforts and resource needs, including those developed or initiated by other agencies.
- b. To work cooperatively with the state and adjust the land ownership patterns in the Denali Block to create a recreational use system which meets the public needs.
- c. To develop and maintain cooperative partnerships with national, state and local tourism entities, and the private sector while fostering a "cooperative spirit".
- d. To develop interagency recreational opportunities by developing MOU's and interagency agreements wherever possible.
- e. To utilize a volunteer program.
- f. To cooperatively work with government and private land owners in suitable disposal of refuge.

5. Economic Development

- a. To encourage the private individual to undertake recreational management to provide the public with opportunities the government agencies are unable to.
- b. To support common goals in providing recreation opportunities on the Public Lands and provide additional economic stability to local economies.
- c. To promote tourism through the implementation of an interpretive road system through the Block.
- d. To promote private development of recreational opportunities to support the economic stability of local economies.
- e. To establish a user fee system under authority of the LWCF, at qualifying sites and areas to have recreational users assume a greater share of the cost of operating facilities.
- f. To evaluate and establish a public use cabin systems. Consider concessionaire management of the system.
- g. To continue to let contracts to private individuals in remote areas to help manage the recreational facilities.
- h. To foster and maintain cooperative management adventures with national, state and local tourism entities.
- i. To develop a trail system network, public use cabin system, ORV system and winter and summer recreational opportunity network.
- j. To support the federal budget by collecting LWCF fees.

6. Maintenance

- a. To maintain existing facilities and the recreational land base to provide for quality experiences.
- b. To manage and maintain recreation facilities taht provide for proper use of land and water based resources.
- c. To provide for a level of maintenance that will meet all health, safety and physically impaired standards.
- d. To provide a level of maintenance that will be compatible with environmental design criteria.
- e. To design facilities in a manner to minimize maintenance obligations for the long-term.
- f. To utilize BLM personnel, volunteers, cooperative management agreements, contracts to the private sector and other means to guarantee an appropriate standard of care for the recreational resource and facilities.
- g. To dispose of recreation sites that do not meet the BLM recreation program objectives of the Block.
- h. To manage and maintain recreation faclities that provide for proper use of land and water based resources.

C. MAJOR ISSUES

(Draw an issues matrix???)  
(issues/management actions)

Actions taken by the Glennallen District will be targeted to resolve the major issues facing the Denali Block:

1. PROVIDING RECREATION OPPORTUNITY

a. Diversifying the Recreational Opportunity

The BLM can diversify the recreational opportunity in the Denali Block by providing for a variety of experiences to meet a diversity of needs. There is a need to develop facilities and offer experiences that are currently not provided for within the Block. A careful analysis of the existing opportunities and the needs and desires of the recreationalists will prevent the BLM from duplicating facilities and to expand the opportunity spectrum.

A thorough review of the regional opportunities available today and potentially available in the future will help to evolve the BLM's role in providing quality recreational opportunities within the Block. The diversity of opportunities can be expanded by providing for or developing:

- new recreation opportunity classes;
- opportunities for all ages and abilities;
- visitor information programs;
- an interpretive system, brochures and public information systems;
- an interpretive system along the Denali Highway;
- a network of land and water based trail systems;
- opportunities for all season, especially winter;
- all-season public use cabin systems;
- wildlife viewing opportunities;
- destination oriented camping facilities;
- additional access to undeveloped lands, and air access.

The BLM can also expand the public recreation opportunities through encouragement of the private role. BLM facilities should not duplicate the private sector recreational facilities, nor compete with the private businesses.

b. Supporting Local Lifestyles

Many of the people who reside in the Denali Block are living rural or subsistence lifestyles. The local residents gather firewood, houselogs, hunt, fish and gather berries to support their lifestyle. Local residents are used to using ATV's without restriction while engaging in the above listed activities. Government interference with these activities is not appreciated by the public. Some residents of the Block are dependent upon the tourism industry for their survival. The BLM should be developing facilities and encouraging opportunities that will not restrict the private individual from living off the land or offering recreational opportunities. In the case of ATV use, the BLM will need to allow for ATV subsistence related uses.

c. Maintaining Public Access

There are numerous trails and routes which traversed through the Denali Block that supported the native peoples food gathering migrations, mining development and white settlement of the region. In many cases the actual trail routes are not currently known. The BLM will need to inventory the historic trail routes, and where possible should maintain access to the routes, and the routes themselves, in public ownership.

The public also uses certain areas of the Block for fishing, hunting or mountaineering. The accesses to these areas should be preserved in public ownership to avoid a loss of public recreation opportunities, as well as to avoid future trespassing situations.

d. Maintaining a Primitive Character

The public and the agency district staff would like to see the overall regional image to continue to provide a rugged, remote feeling. Overdevelopment of sites, or designs of facilities that are too modern will not blend well with the remote landscape. Any facility development of design will require careful planning and design work to provide for the needs of the recreation user, while continuing to maintain a wilderness type of character.

The need for development of recreational opportunities in a manner that does not damage the cultural heritage. Proper site design and education.

e. Wild River Classification

Portions of two rivers within the Block are classified as wild sections of the federal Wild River System. At the present, the rivers are being managed for existing use, and accomodate motorized boating and ATV shoreline uses. To meet the federally designated wild standards, motorized use will need to be curtailed in the wild sections. The management of these wild sections will require active field presence, with enforcement capabilities.

f. Off Road Vehicle Use

The public is currently in need of additional lands to operate ORV's on, close to population centers. At the present, the public can bring ATV's to the block for use on long weekends. There are a few vehicle closures in the Block, however, the public is generally unaware of the closures. The BLM needs to expand upon the existing vehicle management decisions and specifically outline the areas to be opened to ORV use and the areas to be closed. The decisions will include both summer and winter recreational use. Historic access routes (and the RS2477 trails) will need to be identified and kept open for public use.

Separation of motorized and non-motorized user groups is a management strategy that often does not obtain popular support from the ORV user. However, in many situation, the end result is a better experience for both user groups.



Airplane use is currently restricted to floatplane landings on lakes in the Block, bush craft gravel bar landings on the major river systems and mining camp related airstrips. The BLM will need to evaluate the overall landing patterns to determine if additional airstrip access is warranted. During the winter pilots can land in much of the Block on bush planes with skis, however the winter temperatures are so extreme that winter use of the area is limited. At this time the use is incidental and does not require permitting. In the future if fly-in ski trips develop in association with public use cabin system or private operations the issue will need to be re-addressed.

g. Horse and Llama

There is very limited horse use occurring in the Block at this time, due to the distance of the area from the major populations centers. If trails of longer lengths were developed and publicized for horse-packing, it is likely that the use would increase. Already, trails in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough are receiving more use as the public finds out about the opportunities.

There are also several people in Alaska raising, and using Llama's for backcountry packing trips. Llama use is expected to increase in the Block in the future. At the present, there are no known conflicts with the use of Llama's in the Block.

2. RESOURCE PROTECTION

a. Degradation of the natural, scenic or cultural resources

One of the major issues within the Denali Block is the ongoing concern that unmanaged, unplanned, misplaced or excessive recreational use of an area will have detrimental effects of the natural, scenic or cultural resources. There are already signs of overuse along the Gulkana and Delta Rivers, in the Tangle Lakes Campground and Sourdough Campground. On popular three day weekends, such as the Fourth of July, the existing facilities in the Block are full beyond capacity. Vehicles will be parked in unmanaged areas, on top of fragile tundra or wetland areas. Road development without adequate revegetation and placement of facilities in a visually obtrusive manner has already degraded the visual resource of the Block in some areas.

It is necessary to establish environmental monitoring systems in order to maintain and manage the sensitive natural, cultural and scenic resources. It may be necessary to establish carrying capacity limits in order to maintain the primitive character and to protect the natural and cultural resources at the popular recreation



sites. Continued, uncontrolled recreational use will only continue to degrade the natural resource values within the Block. For example, on the heavily used Gulkana River, it is important for the BLM to act, before the river banks become eroded to the point that the fisheries are effected. Rather than to mitigate for the loss of cultural values, perhaps it is better for the BLM to close the sensitive areas to motorized vehicle use.

By guiding the BLM planning process, recreation planning decisions will be made in a consistent manner with other multiple-use resource management activities and actions. This coordination will guarantee that the total resource base is enhanced. Proper regional recreation planning will help to disperse the recreational user groups, to resolve management problems, to develop facility site designs which resolve resource damage, and to continue with rehabilitation efforts on overused sites. Areas of important natural values can be established as natural areas and restricted to public use. The protection of the natural, cultural and scenic resources will increase visitor satisfaction levels.

b. Managing Variable Demand Patterns

There is a concern by the public and district staff that it is difficult to manage recreational facilities when the use of the facility varies from nearly no use no excessive use on three day weekends, prime fishing days and during hunting season. The planning process and recreational user statistics can help to create a responsive site design, which allows for the overflow situations to be more manageable.

c. Wildlife Conflicts

Within the past two years there has been initial bear encounters along the Gulkana Wild and Scenic Area. As bear habitat exists throughout the Denali Block it is likely human contact with bears will only increase as the recreational use increases. In some cases, improved site design can help this situation. Bear-proofed garbage cans can be installed. Remote camping areas with known conflicts can be signed to advise campers to select alternative sites. Where possible, the people can be directed to another location. However, in river corridors the choices are few. The BLM may find it necessary to work with the State Fish and Wildlife officers and eliminate garbage bears.

Nesting swans, peregrine falcons and bald eagles are all found nesting within the Block. The habitat for these species is sensitive and recreational use should not be allowed to conflict with the sites. A responsible management strategy will allow for recreational use in controlled situations which should not conflict with the wildlife concerns.

d. Pollution

The State Department of Environmental Conservation has begun to inspect all of the unregulated dumps throughout the Denali Block. At the present, it is likely that the undefined dumps will be closed down. The private individuals who contract the maintenance for the public facilities will need to find a reasonable manner in which to dispose of the tons of garbage that is created along the road system. The BLM and the State are working to resolve the situation. One option may be to allow for dumpsters to be placed in key locations along the road and emptied on a monthly basis.

The water quality of the Block is currently acceptable for human consumption. However, with an increased recreational use in concentrated areas there is the possibility of water quality degradation. The BLM will need to make a conscious effort to protect the water quality so that it can support the fisheries and wildlife, as well as the human visiting population.

Air quality is currently not a known problem, however, as traffic increased along the Denali Highway, the BLM should be monitoring the effects of increased vehicle emissions on the fragile tundra vegetation.

e. River Management

Use of the Gulkana Wild River increased 409% from 1972 to 1979. Public use of non-designated rivers has also risen dramatically. As the public develops the skills to paddle on remote rivers, or rivers with whitewater sections, the use of the water based recreational opportunities is rising nationwide. There is public concern that increased use of the river systems could degrade the environmental qualities which BLM is responsible for managing. It will be necessary for the BLM to:

- maintain the water quality;
- prevent unwarranted erosion;
- harden up back country camping sites, designate camping areas, install additional latrines, and prevent resource damage from overuse of the sites;
- determine the necessary water flow capacities for fisheries and recreation;
- to obtain water rights from the state to preserve the flows;
- to protect important habitat for the fisheries, eagles, swans, bald eagles, moose and bear throughout the corridor; and
- establish a resource monitoring program.

### 3. VISITOR SERVICES

#### a. Public Health and Safety

With an increase in public use of land and water based recreation areas, the public health standards will require monitoring and management decisions. There is an increase in Giardia Lamblia, or "beaver fever" in the state. Human waste and litter is found in many areas of the Block once thought to be remote. Development of public wells, availability of information to notify the public to boil water and increased public restroom facilities are needed.

Alaska is experiencing an increasing crime rate and vandalism of facilities and resources. The public is concerned for its safety, as well as the loss of public resources. The BLM has recieved public comment which complains of individuals discharging firearms in the campground areas. Trees are illegally cut, ATV's travel over historic features and vehicles are driven onto sensitive vegetation. The BLM has recently assigned a law enforcement field person to the Glennallen District. This staff persons field presence in the Denali Block area should help to reduce some of the fears of the public, provide the public with service when needed, and to prevent careless resource destruction.

The remoteness of the block and the unpredictable weather in the Block can pose a problem to the unknowledgeable visitor. Public safety can be improved through an active effort to educate the public towards the dangers of hypothermia, local weather patterns, location of public facilities, lodges, telephones, local hospitals , fire departments and state troopers.

The BLM district staff is now dressing in uniformed shirts to help the public identify with its increased field presence. The BLM will continue to operate with uniformed staff members to help the public locate public assistance when needed.

Before remote campsites become overused and overrun with human wastes, the BLM will continue to develop remote latrines with burn barrel storage pits to eliminate any health problems.

#### b. Visitor Information and Interpretation

The BLM needs to assist the public in its quest for increased knowledge of outdoor recreational experiences. The public also needs to develop an awareness and understanding of, and appreciation for the public land resources. The public needs to be provided with guidance on the appropriateness of activities on varying land and

water bases. Public interpretation methods can help agencies protect the environment and to curtail vandalism by helping the public to identify with the resource values.

The Denali Block is rich in cultural heritage and archeological resources. The public can benefit from learning about the pre-historic and historic people's who once lived in the Block. Appropriate interpretive displays can inform and educate the public as to the people's cultures without conflicting with the families of those people who live in the Copper Basin today. The public is often curious about the remnants of the mining era that can be found in the Block. Interpreting the mining history and white settlement of the area will enhance the visitors experience.

The Block also contains a vast variety of flora and fauna, geologic features and significant manmade structures-the Alaska pipeline. The public experience of traveling through the Denali Block could be greatly enhanced if the public could learn more about the area they are traveling through.

The public has difficulty in locating opportunities and even a more difficult time in identifying the government body responsible for providing facilities. The BLM needs to concentrate some effort on improving the signing system through out the Denali Block. Direction signs can direct the public to facility areas that can accomodate use and restrict damaging other valuable resources. Agency signs can assist the public in knowing which agency is responsible for the facility, management area or special designation, whom to contact in case their is a warranted need and where the monies came from to provide the opportunity. Interpretive signs can increase the visitors awareness of the multiple resource values, and increase the quality of the recreational experience through education about the variety of interesting natural and cultural values associated with the recreational experience.

Signing directions for traffic flow, patterns of use, motorized/non-motorised areas, hazards, and management intent help the public understand reasons for agency decisions. Rehabilitation efforts in portions of campgrounds that have been overused will receive more support and less vandalism when the public knows why the agency has fenced off a portion of a site.

Signs can help the visitors to understand the reasons behind the purposes for establishing special use area designations. Once the public understands what a wild river designation can do for a river, rather than just the activities the participant can no longer engage in, the public can develop a support for management actions. The signing and information system can help the public to develop the "Take pride in America" spirit.

c. Field Presence

The Denali Block encompasses \_\_\_\_\_ acres of land. It is physically impossible for field staff to cover the entire area at any one time. At the present, a visitor may drive through the Block and camp at a campground without meeting a single BLM staff person. The current management profile is strongest on the Wild and Scenic River systems, which are receiving some of the heaviest use. However, on the ATV trails or along the Denali Highway there is minimal field presence. The campgrounds are maintained by private citizens under contract and BLM staff are in the campgrounds only on occasion.

For the public to be able to develop a better understanding of the BLM role, it will need to come into contact with BLM staff more frequently. The BLM could diversifying the responsibilities of the field staff and disperse the staff to more areas. A person could be stationed at key locations, such as the Sourdough Creek Campground boat launch, and contact many more visitors than if the staff person were traveling along a river corridor.

It is necessary for the field staff to cover the rivers and trails used by the public as well, to provide for safety needs as required and to have back-country contact with the public. As the BLM diversifies its recreational opportunities and more facilities are developed it will be necessary for the BLM to place more staff in the field.

4. PARTNERSHIPS

a. Management Responsibility for the Block

There is currently a constantly changing pattern of land ownership within the Block. The state has selected lands along the Denali Highway, which the BLM had been managing in the past for recreational use. It is likely that after the state has completed its land selection, that a good deal of the acreage within the Block could once again return to BLM hands for active management. Both the state and the BLM will need to develop a cooperative management approach. The overall intent for management is to continue to provide for the public's use and enjoyment of the recreational opportunities along the Denali Highway irregardless of the final land owner. Wherever possible, the BLM will work with the state to develop memorandums of understanding between the agencies to continue to provide for recreational interests.

b. Land Ownership Patterns

At the time this document is being written, the final land status of the Denali Block is unknown. Portions of the Block will belong to the state. In some cases, the lands will go into native hands for private management. The desired end result is for government agencies and private individuals to continue to work cooperatively to provide the public with quality recreational opportunities throughout the Block.

c. Trespass

At this time there is a problem with the public gaining access to public recreational lands across private lands, especially native lands. Where possible, the BLM will work with the private land owner to resolve the trespass situation. A relocation of access routes is sometimes possible. There is also a trespass problem on native allotment or private parcels of land which are surrounded by vast acres of public land. The public does not distinguish between the land owners. The private individual can post its private property. The BLM will continue to sign the public facilities, more clearly define its boundaries and educate the public as to the lands that are available for public use to help alleviate the problem.

5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

a. Budgetary Capabilities

An ongoing government issue is being capable of funding recreational programs. The Glennallen District may be capable of stretching available resources by developing partnerships with other agencies, utilizing existing volunteers, special interest groups or clubs, student conservation association members, establishing user fee systems and special use permits.

The BLM could reduce the dependency of the recreational program on federal funding by generating increased revenues from the outdoor recreation industry. To continue to provide a portion of the spectrum of opportunities in the Block, the BLM could consider the following:

- entering into concessionaire contracts for management of some types of facilities;
- developing a fee system for campground use;
- operating interpretive centers on a receipt basis;
- designing facilities to incorporate user fee systems;
- developing a public use cabin system and charging the public for the operation costs;
- entering into joint agency cooperative management agreements;
- and encouraging private enterprise.

## 6. MAINTENANCE

Many of the existing facilities and trails within the Block are run down and worn out. The sites have not been rehabilitated nor redesigned to meet the current demand levels. The BLM seasonal staff have maintained the existing structures to the best of their ability, however, many of the sites are overdue for major rehabilitation efforts. The Sourdough creek campground is receiving 100-500 times its capacity of use already. The adjoining resources are receiving damage.

The existing trails in the Block are not maintained. In most cases the use is limited and the trails do not receive extensive use. As the public becomes more aware of the recreational resources available in the Block, the more maintenance needs will be required.

The Wild and Scenic River Corridors are already being impacted by recreational use. The BLM will need to maintain the Wild character of the Gulkana River in the near future. The BLM may need to perform some bank stabilization efforts at the Canyon Creek portage, continue to develop established camping areas and limit the dispersed, non-controlled recreational use of the river corridor. On-going maintenance of the rivers is needed to remove the excessive amounts of litter left behind by paddlers and fisherman.



## CHAPTER III-THE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

### A. Introduction

The following actions have been developed to meet the overall goals and objectives for the Denali Block. The actions will direct the Glennallen District recreational programming, maintenance and development through the year 2000.

(OUTLINE FOR ALL SUBUNITS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN GENE AND LARRY DEFINE THE ROS CLASSES FOR THE ENTIRE BLOCK IN DETAIL)

### B. The Management Subunit Name

1. Management Subunit Description
2. Recreation Opportunity Class Description
3. Background and Constraints
4. Management Intent Statement
5. Planned Actions

#### 4333-Recreation Management

- 10-Planning, agreements
- 11-Permitting
- 12-Visitor Services
- 13-Resource Protection
- 08-Planning ammendments
- 09-EA
- 06-Inventory

#### 4712-Maintenance

- 10-Maintenance. condition, survey
- 11-Scheuled maintenance
- 12-Corrective maintenance
- 13-Ground and area
- 14-water and sewer

#### 4713-Trails and Roads

- 10-Maintenance. condition, survey
- 11-Scheuled maintenance
- 12-Corrective maintenance
- 13-Ground and area
- 14-water and sewer
- 15-bridge

### C. Subunit Guidelines

1. Recreation Management
2. Mainenance
3. Trails and Roads



MANAGEMENT SUBUNIT I  
GULKANA RIVER

A. Introduction

The following actions have been developed to meet the overall goals and objectives for the Denali Block. The actions will direct the Glennallen District recreational programming, maintenance and development through the year 2000 in the Gulkana River Subunit.

B. Gulkana River Subunit

1. Management Description

The area managed by the BLM covers 114,680 acres which includes 181 miles of designated wild river. The breakdown for the acreage is as follows:

- 91,000 acres-designated National Wild River
- 8,320 acres-area around Paxson Lake Campground and south end of Paxson Lake
- 15,360 acres-area around upper West Fork Gulkana River

Recreational opportunities available in the management subunit include:

Public uses of the area:  
Floatboating, powerboating, fishing and camping  
Primitive hiking and backpacking  
Wildlife viewing, hunting and fishing  
Photography and sightseeing  
Skiing, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling  
ORV use on existing trails for access to the area

The following components are included in the management subunit:

Motorized Access Points

Meir Lake Trailhead  
Swede Lake Trailhead  
Haggard Creek Trailhead

Non-motorized Access Points

Dickey Lake Portage  
Canyon Lake Trailhead

Boat Access Points

Paxson Lake Campground  
Paxson Lake Wayside  
Sourdough campground  
Dickey Lake Portage  
Tyone River Portage

Improved Access Roads

Paxson Campground Road  
Sourdough Campground Road

Developed Trails

Meier Lake Trail  
Swede Lake Trail  
Haggard Creek Trail  
Canyon Lake Trail  
Dickey Lake Portage  
Middle Fork Trail

Semi-developed Trails

Paxson Lake Campground  
Sourdough Campground

Undeveloped Sites

Gulkana River

Paxson Lake to Middle Fork (3)  
Middle Fork to Canyon Rapids (5)  
Portage Area (2)  
Canyon Rapids to West Fork (5)  
West Fork to Sourdough (5)  
Occasionally used sites (106)

River and Lake Components

Paxson Lakeshore  
Gulkana River-main Stem (from Paxson Lake to Sourdough Creek) (47 miles);  
Middle Fork (from Dickey Lake to Main Stem) (32 miles)  
West Fork Gulkana River (72 miles)  
Canyon Lake landing area, dispersed camping sites and trail  
Upper South Branch West Fork (30 miles)  
Keg Lake  
Fish Lake

2. Recreational Opportunity Class Description

(See map on page \_\_\_\_)

Primitive: The designated wild sections of the river system.

Traditional: Portions of the designated wild and the recreational sections of the river system, when used for subsistence purposes only.

Semi-primitive Motorized: The designated recreational sections of the river system, from one mile above the confluence of the West Fork, and the undesignated section of the river to the Glenn Highway bridge.

Semi-primitive non-motorized: Portions of the subunit that lie between the roaded natural portions of the Richardson Highway Corridor and the active river corridor.

Roaded Natural: Portions of the recreational section of the river system, where the river comes into contact with the Richardson Highway.

Rural: The Sourdough Campground area receives a heavy concentration of users in a developed area. The site lies adjacent to a popular roadhouse with phones and access to emergency services, gasoline, food and lodging.

### 3. Background and Constraints

The Gulkana National Wild River, located in Southcentral Alaska about 200 road miles east of Anchorage, heads at an elevation of 3,210 feet at Summit Lake in the Alaska Range. From there it flows south to Paxson Lake and then south to its confluence with the Copper River. In 1980, the Gulkana (including the Middle and West Forks) was designated as a National Wild River and is now managed by the Bureau of Land Management's Glennallen District Office.

The management of this portion of the subunit is constrained by the federally designated wild river system regulations. Management must follow the regulations governing wild rivers.

Access to the river system is also a limiting factor. The main stem access is by boat across three miles of Paxson Lake from Paxson Lake Campground; by traveling cross country via the Meiers Lake Trail or Haggard Creek Trail; or by flying to Canyon Lake and hiking a short trail to reach Canyon Rapids. At Canyon Rapids, there is a one-quarter mile portage on the left bank around a class III rapid.

Access to the Middle Fork is from Upper Tangle Lakes via a one mile portage to Dickey Lake or by flying into Dickey Lake. The 13 mile long Swede Lake Trail crosses the Middle Fork 8 miles below Dickey Lake. The south branch of the West Fork can be reached by portage from the Tyone River or by flying to one of its headwater lakes. The north branch of the West Fork is accessible by float plane to its headwater lakes.

The put-in point for float trips on the Gulkana River is at Paxson Lake Campground. The site is accessible from the Richardson Highway at MP \_\_\_\_\_. The take-out point for trips on all three forks of the Gulkana River is at Sourdough Campground located at mile 147.5 Richardson Highway.

The subunit contains concentrations of historical/cultural features which require state and federal protection. Prior to development within the subunit, these sites require archeological clearances.

The subunit also contains nesting sites for swans and bald eagles. Both species of birds are very sensitive to human influence. Any development of facilities within the subunit need to be consistent with the requirements for protection of sensitive bird species.

4. Management Intent Statement

- a. Primary Uses: The primary use of the subunit is for outdoor recreational use to occur at the developed campgrounds of Paxson Lake or Sourdough Creek Campground, along the Gulkana river corridor, or along existing trail systems in the subunit. Hunting, fishing, camping, wildlife viewing, berry picking, ATV riding, floating and motorboating are the most popular recreation uses occurring in the Block. Protection of critical wildlife habitat and archeological resources are also primary uses of the Block.
- b. Physical Setting: The southern end of the Block is wooded spruce and cottonwood mixed forest, with occasional views to the north of the Alaska Range. The Gulkana river environment is a main influence on the physical setting. As one moves into the northern end of the Block, the treeline begins to give way to a more sparsely vegetated spruce bog type of vegetation. As the trees become sparse, the views of the Gulkana River, the Alaska Range and the Wrangell Range become more predominant.
- c. Social Setting: Within the roaded natural corridor of the Richardson Highway, the recreationist can expect to be in contact with people on a frequent basis, especially within the two major developed campgrounds. Once on the Gulkana Wild River, the visitor can expect to see people on a less frequent basis. At the present the use of the river is not controlled and the river can actually be crowded on popular three day weekends and during the weeks of peak salmon runs. However, when the use reaches a level that the BLM determines to be excessive of the Wild river standards, the use will be controlled to guarantee the recreationist a set social experience. Currently, use along the trail systems in the subunit is very light and the recreationist is not likely to cross paths with other parties, except during hunting season when the use can become more intense.
- c. ROS Description: The Gulkana River Subunit will be managed to maintain the ROS spectrum as described in section B.2. above. The subunit will contain primitive, traditional, semi-primitive non-motorized, semi-primitive motorized, roaded natural and rural classes as shown on map \_\_\_, page \_\_\_.

The Gulkana River classified as primitive or traditional, will be managed to maintain a remote wilderness experience and primitive character. Uses which are not consistent with the wild and recreational designations of the federal river system and which do not maintain a primitive, traditional or semi-primitive non-motorized opportunity will not be allowed within the Wild section of the river. Specifically, motorized vehicle use, cabin construction, concessions development and high use densities will not be permitted.

Motorized vehicles may be used within the river corridor in accordance with ANILCA for subsistence related purposes. However, motorized vehicle use will require a permit for use within the river corridor.

Motorized vehicle use within the Gulkana River subunit will be restricted to the semi-primitive motorized classification areas. This includes the \_\_\_\_\_ trail and the \_\_\_\_\_. This does not include the \_\_\_\_\_ trail which lies within the Wild river corridor, which is designated for primitive use, except when motorized vehicle use is related to subsistence purposes and covered by a permit from BLM.

Development of facilities, or modifications of the natural environment is allowed within the roaded natural corridor. Interpretive displays, rest stops or other development is appropriate.

Heavy concentrations of use and development will be allowed within the rural classification. The Sourdough Creek Campground area will be developed to accommodate the intensive recreational use already occurring at the site.

## 5. Planned Actions

### a. 4333-Recreation Management

#### 10-Planning, agreements

- a. Project Plans for development of facilities within the subunit, Sourdough Creek Campground and \_\_\_\_\_ trail.
- b. Develop a trail plan for the trails within the subunit to define operation, maintenance and acceptable use levels.
- c. Enter into a cooperative management agreement with the State of Alaska to allow the BLM to manage the Gulkana River from Sourdough Creek Campground to the Glenn Highway bridge.
- d. Enter into a cooperative management agreement with Ahetna to maintain public access to the Gulkana river at \_\_\_\_\_.

#### 11-Permitting

- a. Establish a permit system to control subsistence related motorized use in non-motorized classified areas.
- b. Establish a permit system for commercial use of the Wild Gulkana River.
- c. Monitor private use on the Gulkana river and determine if a permit system is necessary for maintaining the Wild standard of the river.

## 12-Visitor Services

- a. Develop the new site plan at Sourdough Creek Campground to diversify recreational opportunities, enhance the natural and cultural values of the site, provide for handicapped opportunities, provide for boat launching, nature trails, fishing trails, day use activities and overnight camping.
- b. Develop an interpretive display within the Sourdough Creek Campground to explain the Wild river designation, allowable uses, archeological values, bear safety and other important resource information.
- c. Establish a campground host site and volunteer person at the Sourdough Creek Campground to enable the visitor to have contact with the BLM.
- d. Establish a river check-in/out station at the Sourdough Creek Campground to enable the BLM to have contact with river users and to maintain accurate river use records.
- e. Develop a visitor contact station at the entrance of the Sourdough Creek Campground.
- f. Encourage concessionaire rentals of canoes/rafts at the Paxson Lake and Sourdough Creek Campground.
- g. Place facility signs at all trailheads, and recreational sites within the subunit.
- h. Construct a viewing blind at \_\_\_\_\_ to promote wildlife viewing opportunities.
- i. Develop an informational brochure for the roaded natural portion of the subunit to help the visitor develop an appreciation for the natural, cultural and scenic values.
- j. Continue to provide staff training for water and back-country rescue techniques and emergency care.

## 13-Resource Protection

- a. Perform all necessary archeological clearances for proposed developments in the Sourdough Creek Campground and on \_\_\_\_\_ trails.
- b. Construct the new site plan for the Sourdough Creek Campground to prevent additional resource damage from occurring at the site.

- c. Establish six camping sites along the Gulkana River between the middle and west forks to concentrate overnight camping use in six major areas rather than along the entire stretch of the river. Include latrine facilities at these sites.
- d. Post the middle fork ? confluence as "no camping allowed" to help eliminate conflict with bears.
- e. Survey the swan and bald eagle nesting sites along the major motorized trails in the subunit \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ and determine if the trails should be rerouted to avoid interference with the nesting birds.
- f. Establish and maintain accurate user data and monitor resource impacts on all established sites. Develop a carrying capacity for each facility.
- g. Reduce overcrowded conditions and limit specific types of activities where present management is damaging natural, scenic or cultural resources.
- h. Coordinate recreational management efforts with the Gulkana River Habitat Management Plan.
- i. Determine the minimum instream flow requirements that are necessary to meet the national standards for wild river status. Work with the state of Alaska to reserve the required instream flow for fisheries and recreational use.
- j. Work cooperatively with the state Dept. of Fish and Game to protect and enhance wildlife habitat in the subunit.

#### 08-Planning ammendments

- a. Ammenments to the Gulkana River Plan to make the plan consistent with the Wild designation
- b. Ammend the Gulkana Federal Wild River legislation to include an additional \_\_\_\_\_ acres of land at the headwaters of the West Fork.

09-EA

- a. Complete the Sourdough Creek Campground EA to allow for development of the site by 1989.
- b. Complete the EA's on the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ trail systems to allow for development of the trails.

06-Inventory

- a. Perform a resource inventory of the subunit in the Sourdough Creek Campground development area.
- b. Perform a resource inventory of the subunit along the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ trails.

b. 4712-Maintenance

10-Maintenance, condition, survey

11-Scheduled maintenance

12-Corrective maintenance

13-Ground and area

14-water and sewer

- a. Install a well within the Sourdough Creek Campground in the overnight camping area and at the boat launch area.
- b. Install two additional latrines within the Sourdough Creek Campground.
- c. Administer special recreation use permit program and user fees.

c. 4713-Trails and Roads

10-Maintenance, condition, survey

11-Scheduled maintenance

12-Corrective maintenance

13-Ground and area

14-water and sewer

- a. Install an additional six latrines along the Gulkana Wild River.
- b. Install a latrine at the \_\_\_\_\_ trailhead.

15-bridge

- a. Install a new entrance bridge at the Sourdough Creek Campground.
- b. Construct an ATV bridge at \_\_\_\_\_ along \_\_\_\_\_ trail across \_\_\_\_\_ water course.



C. Subunit Guidelines

1. Recreation Management

- a. Recreational management will be consistent with the recreational opportunity classification.

2. Maintenance

- a. The Gulkana River will be maintained as a remote wild river.

3. Trails and Roads

- a. The Haggard Creek Trail will be open to motorized vehicles. The BLM will relocate the portions of the trail that come in contact with the primitive corridor of the Gulkana Wild River.

## CHAPTER 4-IMPLEMENTATION PHASING AND COSTS

- A. Introduction
- B. Public Recreation Management and Capital Improvements
- C. Resource Protection
- D. Cooperative Agreements
- E. Economic Growth

or/or/or/or/????????????????

or????????????????

### A. Implementation Phasing

#### 1. Public Recreation Management and Capital Improvements

Research Requirements

Instream Flow Priorities

Carrying Capacity Studies

Habitat-fisheries

Habitat-Birds of Prey and Swans

#### 7. Cooperative agreements

MOU's

#### 8. Land Exchanges

State

Inclusion into the Wild and Scenic River Systems

#### 9. Archeological clearances

B. Cost Estimates

Cost Estimate and Implementation

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	<u>FY87</u>	<u>Program</u>	<u>WM's</u>	<u>Total</u>
1.		4333		
2.				
3.				

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Annual Costs:

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<u>Program</u>	<u>WM's</u>	<u>WM\$</u>
4331		
4333		
4712		
4713		

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C. Annual Work Plans

D. Program Packages

CHAPTER V-APPENDIX

- A. Glossary of Terms and Acronyms
- B. Participants in the Planning Effort
- C. Summary of Alternatives
- D. Plan Monitoring and Revision
- E. Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Class Descriptions
- F. ROS Class and Management Program Alternatives
- G. Environmental Assessment
- H. Wild and Scenic River
- I. MOU's
  - Gulkana River: use of water body; mining claims; use of land between OHW; water quality; instream flow; water rights; visitor management.
- J. Management Program Alternatives

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